

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 2639

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, BB, US
SUBJECT: NAVAL FACILITY BARBADOS: NEW DEVELOPMENTS

1. DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DEVELOPMENTS
RELATING TO THE NAVAL FACILITY (NAVFAC) WHICH BEAR REPORTING:

A. THE OPPOSITION PARTY IS CURRENTLY UNDER HEAVY ATTACK BY
THE GOVERNMENT FOR ALLEGED CORRUPTION. THE DLP IS HARD
PRESSED AT THE MOMENT TO DEFEND ITSELF. IF IS CLEAR THEY
WOULD WELCOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT ON THE
NAVFAC QUESTION IF THE CHANCE AROSE. LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
FREDERICK SMITH HAS ASKED ME IF IT WERE TRUE THAT THE
CURRENT GOVERNMENT WAS ASKING, "\$20 MILLION TO EXTEND THE
NAVFAC AGREEMENT." I LIMITED MY REPLY TO SMITH TO SAYING
THAT THE GOB ASKED A PRICE FOR EXTENDING THE NAVFAC
AGREEMENT WHICH WAS OUT OF THE BALL PARK FOR US, BUT THAT
WE WERE CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS. CAMERON TUDOR THE OPPOSITION'S
FOREIGN POLICY EXPERT ASKED FOR ONE OF HIS PERIODIC
CHATS WITH ME. HE SAID HE WANTS TO DISCUSS THE NAVFAC
NEGOTIATIONS. GIVEN THE WIDE PUBLIC SUPPORT OF THE
NAVFAC AND ITS IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO BARBADOS'
ECONOMY, I SUSPECT THE DLP IS SNIFFING AROUND THE
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NEGOTIATIONS AS A POSSIBLE ISSUE.

B. I HAD THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL BANK TO DINNER
LAST WEEK. HE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESSURES ON
BARBADOS' BALANCE OF PAYMENTS. AFTER COMMENTING ON
FOREIGN MINISTER FORDE'S PUBLIC INDICATION THAT THERE
MIGHT BE PROBLEMS IN EXTENDING THE NAVFAC HE ASKED ME

ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS. I FILLED HIM IN ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO BARBADOS' ECONOMY MADE BY THE NAVFAC AND INDICATED TO HIM THAT AT THE PRESENT THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT GOING ESPECIALLY WELL. HE SEEMED SURPRISED AND CONCERNED. HE ASKED FOR MORE SPECIFIC FISCAL INFORMATION WHICH WE CAN GIVE HIM.

C. ONE OF BARBADOS' MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL BUSINESSMEN, FRED GODDARD, AT A SMALL GATHERING AT THE RESIDENCE QUERIED ME ON THE STATE OF PLAY. HE TOLD ME IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT CONFIDENCE FOR THE NAVFAC NEGOTIATIONS TO SUCCEED. HE WILL MAKE THE SAME POINT IN THE GOVERNMENT.

D. I RAN INTO JEAN HOLDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CARIBBEAN TOURISM RESEARCH CENTER. HE FILLED ME IN ON BARBADOS' TOURIST PROSPECTS, WHICH THIS YEAR LOOK VERY FAVORABLE. HE SAID, HOWEVER, HE WAS CONCERNED BY INDICATIONS THERE MAY BE DIFFICULTIES OVER THE NAVFAC AND IT MIGHT BE A PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TOURIST SEASON. I TOLD HIM THAT THERE DID SEEM TO BE A SMALL PROBLEM AS OF NOW BUT THAT I WAS SURE IT WOULD ALL WORK OUT AND NOT HARM THE TOURIST SEASON. HE NONETHELESS SEEMED CONCERNED.

E. JACK DEAR WHO IS REGARDED AS THE EMINENCE GRIS
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IN THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT TELEPHONED ME AT HOME TO SAY HE HAD BEEN CONSULTED--HE DID NOT SAY BY WHOM, BUT I SUSPECT BY PRIME MINISTER ADAMS, OVER BARBADOS' NEXT STEP IN THE NAVFAC NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THE BARBADIAN AIDE MEMOIRE OF AUGUST 4 TOO SERIOUSLY. WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT ITS AUTHORS HAD VERY LITTLE EXPERIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND BARBADOS WAS ALWAYS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF OUR FINAL RENTAL OFFER HE WAS RECOMMENDING BARBADOS ADOPT A POSITION "LIKE THAT OF BAHAMAS" WHICH WOULD HAVE EFFECT OF KEEPING THE NAVFAC IN OPERATION. BARBADOS WOULD NOT DECIDE ON A FORMAL EXTENSION OF THE NAVFAC AGREEMENT UNTIL THE EXTENT OF THE U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PACKAGE TO BARBADOS WAS APPARENT. IF OUR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WAS ON A SCALE CONSIDERED ADEQUATE BY THE GOB THEN THE GOB WOULD TAKE STEPS FORMALLY TO EXTEND THE NAVFAC. I, OF COURSE, SAID, THERE COULD BE NO LINKAGE. NONETHELESS, THIS IS AN INTERESTING CONCEPT HAVING THE VIRTUE OF ALLOWING US TO ATTAIN OUR GOALS AND OF AVOIDING A CONFRONTATION.

F. FOREIGN MINISTER FORDE HAD ME TO DINNER AT HIS

HOUSE OVER THE WEEKEND. I BELIEVE HE ALSO INVITED MEMBERS OF THE CABINET BUT ONLY ONE (BRATHWAITE) PUT IN AN APPEARANCE WHILE I WAS THERE. AT THE END OF THE PARTY FORDE TOLD ME HE HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT OUR SITUATION AND THAT HE WAS CONVINCED WE COULD WORK OUT THE PROBLEM. I TOLD HIM THAT WAS MY FERVENT WISH AND THAT I WAS AT HIS ENTIRE DISPOSITION. HE SAID WE WOULD BE IN CONTACT AFTER THE QUEEN'S VISIT. ORTIZ

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